

27 September 1966

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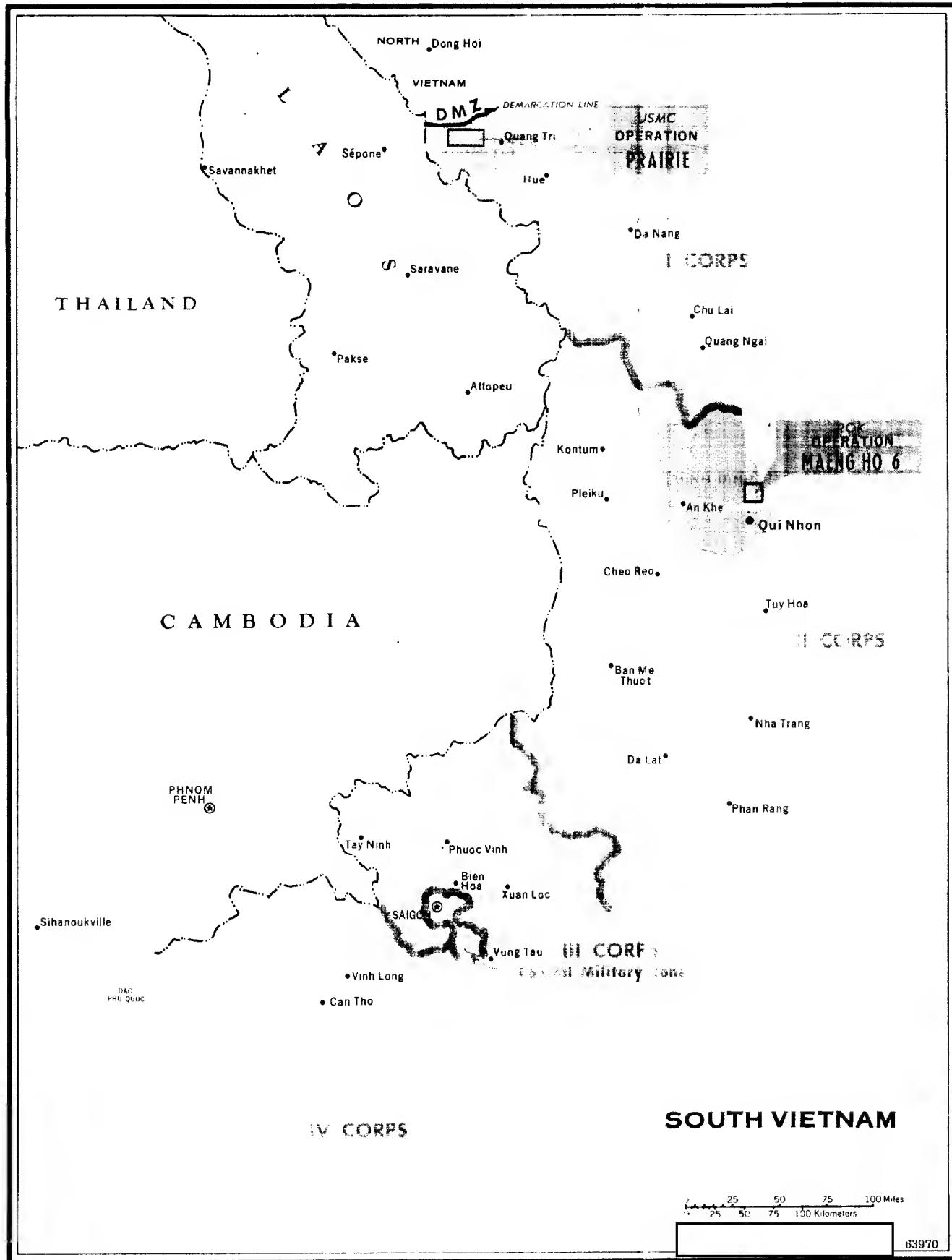
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: The newly elected constituent assembly held its first formal meeting today and was addressed by both Chief of State Thieu and Premier Ky.

The assembly hall was heavily guarded by security troops as a precaution against any Viet Cong sabotage effort. There were also unconfirmed reports that an unidentified Buddhist group might attempt to demonstrate outside the hall and to present the delegates with a series of demands. The group allegedly planned to represent any move to prevent the demonstration as an example of "government oppression" and to claim that the assembly election was fraudulent. No incidents have been reported.

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Four US Marine battalions are continuing to press their major offensive--Operation PRAIRIE--against elements of the North Vietnamese Army 324B Division near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in northernmost Quang Tri Province. However, only light, sporadic contact with enemy forces has been reported during the past 24 hours.

In coastal Binh Dinh Province, four battalions of the South Korean (ROK) Tiger Division conducting search-and-destroy Operation MAENG HO 6 reported a series of sharp clashes with Communist troops in mountainous terrain six miles north of Qui Nhon. Cumulative casualty totals for this operation, which began on 22 September, currently stand at 140 Viet Cong killed and 140 captured, as against six ROK killed and 26 wounded.

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South Korea: President Pak Chong-hui is moving to contain the political infighting which threatens to upset the balance of power in the regime.

The President has made minor changes in his cabinet to help appease the public indignation generated by the recent smuggling scandal. He, however, is continuing to protect his own supporters among high regime officials who are the object of a power play engineered by government party chairman Kim Chong-pil to gain control of the regime's sources of political funds. If Kim should succeed, he would have the upper hand in selecting the government party's National Assembly candidates in next year's elections and in choosing its presidential candidate in 1971 when Pak will be ineligible for re-election.

Meanwhile, the opposition is attempting to turn the scandal to its own political advantage. The two leading opposition parties have buried their long-standing antipathies to the extent of scheduling a joint antigovernment rally. [redacted]

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